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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 003469

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [KMPI](#) [PL](#)

SUBJECT: POLAND: COMBATING EXTREMISM

REF: STATE 159129

Classified By: DCM Kenneth Hillas, for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (U) Summary: Muslim extremism is not perceived to be an issue of concern in Poland; the Muslim community is very small and the population is 96 percent Roman Catholic. However, the Embassy and ConGen Krakow closely monitor the media for any indications of rising extremist threats. Given the country's relative religious and ethnic homogeneity, episodes of intolerance, especially acts that are anti-Semitic and anti-homosexual, do occasionally occur in Poland. Thus, our Mission proactively combats this brand of ultra-conservative extremism via active engagement with civil society and public affairs programming promoting tolerance and diversity throughout the country. End Summary.

2. (C) In response to reftel, we provide a sample of the types of USG-funded and organized public affairs programs which promote tolerance in Poland.

Bridges of Tolerance: long-term (currently over two years in operation, ongoing) workshop program targeted at press, public officials, academics and youth which addresses the causes and consequences of intolerance. Funding comes both from State PD grants as well as local and international NGOs. Speakers have included Church officials, international experts and academics, and high-ranking government officials. Workshops foster open dialogue on religion, diversity, and tolerance. Program has been highly effective and post recommends its continued funding and support.

Warsaw Jewish Film Festival: long-term (involvement began in 2004, ongoing) support to First Jewish Film Festival in May 2005. Promotes both Polish film industry and Jewish history, culture, and remembrance. Initial program was successful and post hopes to continue involvement in future years.

Teacher training on Holocaust: long-term (program started in 2002, ongoing) effort to send teachers identified as having great potential to impact youth education in Poland on Holocaust issues. Several Polish teachers are sent each year to US educational institutions for a seminar on how to address the Holocaust in primary and high school classroom settings. Teachers are also funded for a trip to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. Program has been successful and post hopes to continue its funding.

3. (C) The following responses are keyed to areas of interest in reftel.

--How post is monitoring and/or countering incitement and hate speech occurring within your host country and region.

Post vigilantly monitors the press for incidents of extremism. Embassy officers are also actively engaged with a diverse array of influential civil society members who alert us to any radical statements or activities. While rare, the majority of such manifestations of intolerance involve the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, statements targeting ethnic minorities, and anti-homosexual rhetoric.

--What post is doing or plans to do to work with local communities to spread a message of tolerance and non-violence.

In addition to the types of ongoing programs mentioned above, Embassy officers maintain strong relationships with Catholic and Jewish leaders, who are among the most vocal advocates of tolerance in Poland. Post also sponsors activities to bring together American NGOs such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee and Polish NGOs such as Villa Decius with local leaders to discuss and promote tolerance.

--Identify individuals and groups who embody and promote tolerance and have broad influence among Muslim youth.

Post has begun developing a Muslim outreach program to better understand the small muslim community in Poland. We plan to report more detailed information on key Muslim players in subsequent combating extremism reports.

Government of Poland's efforts to:

--Create spaces for open intellectual debate through media

and internet.

Poland is an open society with a wide array of spaces for intellectual debate; the GOP does not have to actively address this issue.

--Identify individuals or groups engaged in incitement of violence.

The GOP has been slow to react to individuals engaged in intolerant behavior. However, former President Lech Walesa and other political leaders have openly criticized the extremist stances of the Catholic nationalist "All Polish Youth League" which promotes ultra-conservative intolerant views and publicly bashes foreigners and homosexuals. The upper echelons of the Catholic hierarchy are outspoken proponents of tolerance and understanding; however, some lower level priests have been unabashedly anti-Semitic.

--Amplify voices of moderation, tolerance, and freedom.

The GOP's efforts in this arena include a true commitment to remembrance of the horrors of WWII and the Holocaust. A recent example of this was the GOP-coordinated ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in January 2005, an event which attracted survivors of the concentration camp as well as international heads of state. The event prompted public discussion of the threat of extremism, the value of tolerance, and related themes. --Ensure readily accessible public education, particularly for women and girls.

Public education is readily accessible for all Polish citizens regardless of gender.

--Encourage modern education that accepts pluralism and open intellectual exchange.

Polish higher education is on par with Western European standards; open intellectual exchange is valued and fostered. Higher education is almost fully subsidized by the GOP.

--Identify, promote, and work with non-governmental partners and the press who advocate religious tolerance and moderation.

The GOP's Ombudsman for Human Rights is charged with cultivating NGO contacts who promote tolerance and freedom among other human rights duties. While active, his work receives limited GOP resources and limited public attention. Ashe